

NHC PREDICTS VERY ACTIVE 2006 NORTH ATLANTIC HURRICANE SEASON

Residents in Hurricane Prone Areas Urged to Make Preparations

The National Hurricane Center announced today to America and its neighbors throughout the north Atlantic region that a very active hurricane season is looming, and encouraged individuals to make preparations to better protect their lives and livelihoods. May 21-27 is National Hurricane Preparedness Week.

During a news conference at the National Hurricane Center, Deputy Secretary of Commerce David A. Sampson noted, "Preparation is the key message that President Bush wants to convey during National Hurricane Preparedness Week. The impact from these storms extends well beyond coastal areas so it is vital that residents in hurricane prone areas get ready in advance of the hurricane season."

"For the 2006 north Atlantic hurricane season, National Hurricane Center is predicting 13 to 16 named storms, with eight to 10 becoming hurricanes, of which four to six could become 'major' hurricanes of Category 3 strength or higher," added retired Navy Vice Adm. Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator.

On average, the north Atlantic hurricane season produces 11 named storms, with six becoming hurricanes, including two major hurricanes. In 2005, the Atlantic hurricane season contained a record 28 storms, including 15 hurricanes. Seven of these hurricanes were considered "major," of which a record four hit the United States. "Although the National Weather Service is not forecasting a repeat of last year's season, the potential for hurricanes striking the U.S. is high," added Lautenbacher.

Warmer ocean water combined with lower wind shear, weaker easterly trade winds, and a more favorable wind pattern in the mid-levels of the atmosphere are the factors that collectively will favor the development of storms in greater numbers and to greater intensity. Warm water is the energy source for storms while favorable wind patterns limit the wind shear that can tear apart a storm's building cloud structure.

This confluence of conditions in the ocean and atmosphere is strongly related to a climate pattern known as the multi-decadal signal, which has been in place since 1995. Since then, nine of the last 11 hurricane seasons have been above normal, with only two below-normal seasons during the El Niño years of 1997 and 2002.

With neutral El Niño/Southern Oscillation (ENSO) conditions expected across the equatorial Pacific during the next three to six months, the Climate Prediction Center scientists say that neither El Niño nor La Niña will likely be a factor in this year's hurricane season.

"Whether we face an active hurricane season, like this year, or a below-normal season, the crucial message for every person is the same: prepare, prepare, prepare," said Max Mayfield, director of National Hurricane Center. "One hurricane hitting where you live is enough to make it a bad season."

The north Atlantic hurricane season runs from June 1 through November 30. The National Hurricane Center will issue a mid-season update in early August just prior to the normal August through October peak in activity.

The north Atlantic hurricane seasonal outlook is a product of Climate Prediction Center, National Hurricane Center, and Hurricane Research Division. The National Hurricane Center has hurricane forecasting responsibilities for the north Atlantic as well as the east Pacific regions.

###

On the Web:

National Weather Service: <http://www.weather.gov>

North Atlantic Hurricane Outlook:

<http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/outlooks/hurricane.shtml>

Climate Prediction Center: <http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov>

National Hurricane Preparedness Week: <http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/prepare>

National Hurricane Center: <http://www.nhc.noaa.gov>

NOAA Hurricane Research: <http://www.research.noaa.gov>

NOAA GFDL: <http://www.gfdl.noaa.gov/>